
ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER VIII

**LAND USE AND
TRANSPORTATION**

VIII. LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

A. ISSUES AND OVERVIEW

The linkage between land use and transportation is similar to the chicken and the egg—which comes first? While there is no real answer, there needs to be coordination during the planning phase, as well as infrastructure development. What comes first should not be the debate; rather, the discussion should acknowledge the interdependency between land use and transportation and should seek ways to integrate them into a comprehensive plan.

We tend to deal with mobility and livability as separate, often competing, concepts. While we have institutionalized measures of traffic congestion (volume-to-capacity, average travel speed, and vehicle hours of delay), we have too often ignored measures of livability and community character—those factors that determine the quality of the places we are striving to reach so quickly.¹ A growing number of communities are attempting to fundamentally change the process so that land use and transportation are better linked, bringing the concepts of mobility and livable communities into a single focus. With efforts to create pedestrian-and-transit friendly streets, redevelop old shopping malls into mixed-use walkable town centers, and encourage infill residential development, communities of all sizes are beginning to consider transportation and land use as part of an interrelated system in which mobility and livability are in balance.²

A recent report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) has found that increasing road capacity leads to increased traffic loads. STPP found that every ten percent (10%) increase in the highway network results in a five point three percent (5.3%) increase in the amount of driving, *over and above any increase caused by population growth or other factors*. In addition, the analysis concludes that road building has not been an effective congestion-fighting measure. In fact, STPP found that those metropolitan areas that added the most highway space per person saw congestion levels rise at a slightly higher rate than areas that added few roads.³

County residents are well aware of the length of time it takes to travel in and around the County. This travel time increases each year with an increase in the number of cars per household and an increase in the number of “non-work related” trips. One method used to decrease the amount of traffic in an area is to promote the concentration of residential and commercial development along “transportation” corridors. This is in evidence in the Franconia/Springfield Metro area. Mixed use developments, business and residential, are being built as well as increased parking space at the Metro station.

While many directions can be taken to incorporate land use and transportation into the County’s Comprehensive Plan, EQAC salutes the Transportation Coordination Council (TCC) of Northern Virginia for its insight into this complicated issue. In March, 2001, the TCC issued a report entitled “The Alternative Transportation and Land Use Activity

Strategies Study.” This comprehensive study recommends that future projects be evaluated based on a set of guidelines stemming from the goals and strategies of the 2020 Plan and the regional vision developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) and the Transportation Planning Board (TPB).

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

EQAC agrees with the recommendations of the TCC⁴ as listed below:

1. Provide for multiple use development patterns that reduce automobile dependency, with a mix of jobs, housing, and services in a walkable environment.
2. Encourage development to be located where it can be served by existing infrastructure.
3. Provide incentives for concentrations of residential and commercial development along transportation/transit corridors within and near the regional core and regional activity centers, such as zoning, financial incentives, transfer of development rights, priority infrastructure financing, and other measures.
4. Take advantage of supportive zoning regulations and other tools that will help promote concentration of development within walking distances of transit facilities, and generally promote a pedestrian orientation in new development.
5. Reduce, rather than increase, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and VMT per capita in the region.
6. Promote protection of sensitive environmental, cultural, historical, and neighborhood locations.

LIST OF REFERENCES

¹Blanton, Whit, AICP. “Integrating Land Use and Transportation.” Planning Commissioners Journal, No. 40, Fall, 2000.

²Ibid.

³McMahon, Edward T. “Road Design—A Turn Ahead.” Planning Commissioners Journal, No. 40, Fall, 2000.

⁴ Transportation Coordinating Council of Northern Virginia, Task Force on Land Use and Transportation, “The alternative transportation and land use activity strategies study.” March 28, 2001.